DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 924 EC 182 921

AUTHOR Rau, Dorothea N.; And Others
TITLE An Assessment of Career Education Needs in North Carolina.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the International Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children Division on Career Development (3rd, Las Vegas, NV, October 9-12, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Knowledge Level; Needs Assessment; *Social Adjustment; *Special Education; State Surveys; Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *North Carolina

ABSTRACT

An assessment of the career education needs of exceptional and special needs students was completed by 57 directors of special education and 1,826 teachers in North Carolina, representing 57 of the 140 local education agencies in the state. The survey measured actual and needed career education emphasis within social adjustment training (SAT) and application of career education knowledge (ACEK). Demographic information covered years of teaching, level of teaching, type of setting, sex of teacher, and previous experience for obtaining information about career education. Generally, respondents reported differences and needed content in career education. There were significant differences for SAT and ACEK across actual and needed dimensions for the respondent's position. Teachers, for example, rated their school higher on actual career education emphasis on SAT and ACEK and felt that more instruction was needed than did administrators. Seventy percent could not specify whether their school had an appointed coordinator of special education. Findngs suggested the need to focus on ACEK in the schools as well as in teacher education programs. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ED270924

An Assessment of Career Education Needs In North Carolina

Dorothea N. Rau
Appalachian State University

Fred Spooner
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Michael J. Fimian
Appalachian State University

Running head: CAREER NEEDS

EC182921

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Fred Spooner
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Assessment of Career Education Needs In North Carolina

The North Carolina Federation of the Division on Career Education (NCFDCD) received its charter in 1983 with the responsibility of impacting on the career development of students with exceptionalities and persons who teach those students. In order to ascertain the current state of affairs in the career education for students with exceptionalities in North Carolina the Executive Board conducted a state-wide needs assessment. This activity was deemed a necessary first step in a process of enhancing career education programs for exceptional individuals in the State of North Carolina. It is hoped that over the next decade the results NCFDCD survey can have an impact in shaping the course of career programs for students with exceptionalities.

The Survey

A preliminary instrument was compiled based on assessments created by Brolin, McKay, and West (1978) and the University of Missouri Testing Service and further modified to meet the specific need in North Carolina. The survey focused on two areas: (a) teachers' perceptions of the status of career education in their particular school system, and (b) teachers' perceptions of what is most important for special need students in the area of career education. The preparatory survey was conducted with special education teachers in the Watauga County Schools and findings showed that there were significant differences between what was actually (<u>actual</u>) happening in schools in the area of career education and what teachers felt

should be happening (needed). Based on the feedback from the initial survey, the instrument was revised and directors of special education from 140 local education agencies (LEAs) within the state were contacted by mail and asked if they would be willing to allow their teachers to participate in an assessment of career education needs. Seventy of the one hundred-forty (50%) directors of special education in the LEAs agreed to participate. Questionnaires were returned from 57 of the 70 (81%) of the LEAs that agreed to participate in the survey. A total of 1826 teachers from the 57 LEAs participated in the survey.

The revised instrument was based on a 16 item questionnaire with two likert-type measures across two dimensions -- actual and needed career education emphasis. Two major components -- social adjustment training (SAT) and application of career education knowledge (ACEK)-- were used to summarize the content of the 16 questions (See Table 1). Demographic information (e.g., position, number of years in special education, teaching assignment, gender) was analyzed against the two components (SAT and ACEK) across the two dimensions (actual and needed). For example, on the questionnaire, questions 1-6 asked the respondents to give basic demographic information (e.g., position, number of years involved with special education). Part I of the survey, statements 7-22, asked respondents to rate their agreement with provided statements as they reflected **actual teaching emphasis.** Part II of the survey, statements 23-38, asked respondents to rate their agreement with provided statements as they reflected a **needed or a what "should be" emphasis.** Respondents were requested to rate the items as strongly disagree, mildly disagree, mildly

agree, or strongly agree. Examples of statements from Component 1 (SAT), for both the actual and needed dimensions, were "how to make appropriate decisions regarding daily goals as well as long term goals," "how to function more effectively within the academic environment," and "to use appropriate behavior at home, school, and with friends" were. Statements suggestive of Component 2 (ACEK), for both the dimensions, were "how to find out about job possibilities, how to look for a job, how to apply for and participate in a job interview." In other words, ACEK focused on how to implement Brolin's (1978) competencies into the special education curriculum.

Insert Table 1 about here

Results

A breakdown of the responses by the seven demographic variable classes is illustrated in Table 2. As can be observed from the Table, 94% of the respondents were teachers. The major grouping for years of teaching experience fell between 1 and 15 years, with 38% of the population falling between the range of 6-10 years of experience, while only 3% of the respondents had over 20 years of teaching to their credit. Seventy-nine percent had a teaching assignment in an elementary or middle school environment. Sixty percent indicated that they worked in a rural school setting. Eighty-eight percent of those responding were female. The most

important previous experience for obtaining knowledge about career education was through workshops (28%); however, 23% of the respondents indicated that they had no previous exposure or experience with career education.

A breakdown of the responses by the seven demographic variable classes is illustrated in Table 2. As can be observed from the Table, 94% of the respondents were teachers. The major grouping for years of teaching experience fell between 1 and 15 years, with 38% of the population falling between the range of 6-10 years of experience, while only 3% of the respondents had over 20 years of teaching to their credit. Seventy-nine percent had a teaching assignment in an elementary or middle school environment. Sixty percent indicated that they worked in a rural school setting. Eighty-eight percent of those responding were female. The most important previous experience for obtaining knowledge about career education was through workshops (28%); however, 23% of the respondents indicated that they had no previous exposure or experience with career education. A large majority of respondents, 70%, indicated that there was, to their knowledge, no official appointed coordinator of career education in their school system.

Insert Table 2 about here

Differences Across Both Dimensions and Across Both Components

At a general level, respondents felt that there were differences in the teaching of SAT and ACEK and what was actually happening in there

schools was different from what they would like to see happening in the teaching of the two components that are representative of content areas for career education. A finer grained analysis also suggested that there were significant differences for the two components (SAT and ACEK) across the two dimensions (actual and needed) for the position held by the respondent. Teachers, as a group, rated their school higher on actual career education emphasis on SAT and ACEK and felt that more instruction in the two areas should take place (needed) than did administrators.

Differences on the "Actual" Dimension and ACEK

Other significant differences were found for the actual dimension for ACEK with several other pieces of demographic information. For example, type of teaching assignment, gender of respondents, origin of career education knowledge, and whether the school system of the respondent had an appointed coordinator of career education were all found to differ significantly. Teachers that were employed at a high school level, as a group, felt that they focused on the teaching of ACEK more than teachers at the elementary/middle school level. Males, as a group, felt that they actually focused on ACEK to a greater degree than females. All respondents indicated that the predominate source of their knowledge about career education was from workshops. While a majority of respondents also indicated there was no appointed coordinator of career education in their school. Finally, those respondents who perceived that their school system had an appointed coordinator of career education felt, as a group, as if they were actually doing more in ACEK than those respondents that felt that there was no appointed coordinator of career education.

No Differences Across Dimensions and Across Components

Although it was anticipated that there would be differences on the two dimensions (actual and needed) for the two components (SAT and ACEK) for respondents working in an urban district versus a rural district as well as the number of years the respondent had been teaching in special education, none were found. Teacher responses, whether they worked in an urban or rural district, did not differ significantly with regards to what was actually being taught in the areas of SAT and ACEK and what they wanted to happen in these areas in the future. The number of years that respondents had been teaching did not cause respondents to answer differentially. Teachers, as a group, whether they had 1 year of experience or 20 felt equally about the teaching of SAT and ACEK and also what was actually happening in their in the area of career education for students with exceptionalities and what they needed to happen in the future.

Discussion

In summary, respondents consistently rated the actual use of career education knowledge at a significantly lower level than they deemed necessary within their school. Apparently this area has so far escaped the proper attention of curriculum and instructional strategy planners. Such an impression is further supported by the disparity between administrator and teacher responses. Teachers perceived their school's programs in career education at a higher level, yet still felt a greater need for additional emphasis than did administrators.

Although 88% of the respondents were female; males, as a group, perceived themselves has having a greater impact on the teaching of ACEK

than females. These data, could in part, be attributed to the traditional roles of gender in our society; however, as we are all aware, in the 1980's these stereotyped roles are changing. Women at all ages are experiencing greater opportunity in all professions and vocational pursuits.

Since inservice workshops were the predominate way in which teachers acquired their knowledge about career education for exceptional students, this form of dissemination would also be an appropriate way to increase ACEK at the elementary/middle school level. It should be no surprise that most teachers did not gain their career education knowledge from college courses because the teaching of career education concepts at the college level is just starting to be an issue of great importance. With the on set of transitional programming for students with exceptionalities and the concept that career planning should start in the elementary school coupled with the fact that departments of special education are now focusing on career education, university courses should have a greater impact on the origin of career education knowledge in the future. The increased awareness of transitional programming is also currently being emphasized in the professional literature (e.g., Exceptional Children, 1985, 51 (6)), which should greatly add to the pool of knowledge to which teachers and administrators are exposed.

A large majority of respondents, 70%, could not say that their school had an appointed coordinator of career education. Perhaps, there was indeed, such a persons appointed, but the persons' title was different than what was specified in the questionnaire. It is also possible that the responsibilities of career education were assigned to a person like a vice

principal or an administrative assistant, which would imply that the area was administratively covered, but teachers were unaware as to whom was responsible. On the other hand, it is also plausible that in many districts there has been no such appointment. It is clear from the data that those who perceived that there was a coordinator of career education felt that they actually did more in the area of ACEK than those who said there was no such persons appointed in their district. Thus, explication of title, role, and function of career education personnel appears to be an important aspect for perceived teacher emphasis on career education.

In conclusion, based on our findings we believe:

- special education programs in the schools need to focus on the application of career education knowledge (ACEK),
- institutions of higher education must begin to focus on the application of career education knowledge (ACEK) at both the undergraduate (preservice) and graduate (inservice) levels, and
- school systems should seriously consider appointing someone to fill the role of career education coordinator.

This survey is just the initial process of pointing the way to what needs to be done in the State of North Carolina in the area of career education for students with exceptionalities. It is now up to all of us to apply these data to our own situations and see what can be done to improve the current state of affairs.

References

Brolin, D. E. (1978). Life centered career education: A competency based approach. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Brolin, D. E., McKay, D. J., & West, L. L. (1978). Trainer's guide for life-centered career education. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Exceptional Children (1985),51(6).

Table 1

Focus of NCFDCD Needs Assessment Survey

	Components*	
	SAT	ACEK
Dimensions**	Actual	Actual
	Needed	Needed

*Components Social Adjustment Training (SAT) and Applied Career Education Knowledge (ACEK) were identified from the questionnaire items. **Dimensions (Actual and Needed) represent teacher perceptions of career education emphasis in their schools.

Table 2

N and Percentage of Respondents in Seven Independent Variable Groups

Respondent Variable	Respondent Subsection	N	%
Position	Teachers	1705	94
	Counselors/Administrators and others	121	6
Number of Years In Special Education	1 - 5	562	31
	6 - 10	687	38
	11 - 15	354	19
	16 - 20	139	8
	Over 20	63	3
Teaching Assignment	Elementary/Middle	1354	79
	High School	368	21
Gender	Male	221	12
	Female	558	88
Most Important Previous Experience	None	404	23
	Grants/Research	37	2
	College Courses	446	25
	Articles	396	22
	Workshops	497	28
Appointed Career Education Coordinator	Yes	508	30
	No	1184	70
School Setting	Urban	741	40
	Rural	1085	60